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THE ROLE OF *MADOGUCHI* IN TRANSNATIONAL FASHION

Abstract

This article uses the Japanese concept of *madoguchi*, literally ‘window opening’, and applies it in the context of a transnational fashion landscape. Here, a *madoguchi* acts as an essential go-between person, operating as a mediator between two cultures as well as functioning as a scout, fashion hunter and interpreter. The author’s personal experience as a fashion journalist reporting on notable British creative talent for *Hanatsubaki*, Shiseido’s Japanese in-house fashion magazine, provides a relational perspective on the role, value and skills of a transcultural *madoguchi*, as well as consideration of the challenges that arose from this exchange. Reflections on the peculiarities of translation when communicating cultural content to a foreign readership reveal the ‘traffic in things’ involved in global flows and the impact of evolving technology on professional fashion transmission.

Keywords

madoguchi

fashion

British

Japanese

transnational

publishing

journalism

Hanatsubaki

Shiseido

Introduction

In this article, I examine my professional experience as a *madoguchi*, an agent of transcultural fashion exchange, activated through my role as a freelance fashion reporter sourcing and reporting on creative talent found in the United Kingdom for Japanese multinational cosmetic company Shiseido, in their magazine *Hanatsubaki*, from 2005 to 2012.

In analysing the role, value and process of a fashion *madoguchi*, the basic methodology used is auto-ethnographic, exploring my own practice in the field, observing its particularities and interrogating the results in line with ethnographic fieldwork principles (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011). Also applied is narrative inquiry, a rigorous qualitative research method concerned with ‘a way of understanding experience’ and the aim of observing social ‘stories lived and told’ as reported in personal autobiographical ‘narratives of experience’ (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:

20). I use this mixed-methodology approach to chart my personal experience as a *madoguchi* in order to explore the formal and tacit skills, cultural acuity and instinct necessary to report on fashion for a foreign field. This provides an in-depth and unique insight into an aspect of transnational exchange in the fashion industry that is often invisible. The views of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu ([1979] 2010) on aesthetic judgement, cultural capital and legitimacy in a field of cultural production are also employed to critique my professional responsibilities as aesthetic judge, arbiter of current British fashion trends and critical editor of transferable cultural messages.

This article then interrogates a fashion *madoguchi* in action. An in-depth exploration of my process as fashion reporter (creating content as both writer and photographer) and bicultural intermediary (exporting a representation of British cultural creativity to the Japanese) lends a perspective to my acts of ‘window opening’ that establishes my contribution, limitations and borders as a bicultural ‘point person’ and gatekeeper of fashion. Through visual and textual analysis of sample editorial content created by myself in English in comparison to that adapted into Japanese and published in *Hanatsubaki* magazine, the article also aims to ascertain where and how the multiplicity of authors (writer, editor, graphic designer) of a text affect the final published content, which ultimately presents to its audience one unified presentation of transnational culture. The value of this approach chimes with Miles Ogborn’s proposal that it is necessary to view modernities in different places and as created ‘in the relationships between places and across spaces’ (1998: 19). The value of this comparison is to highlight key points of cultural mediation and evidence the dialectic and reframing role that translation plays in the interpretation of fashion narratives across cultural borders.

The role, function and value of a fashion *madoguchi*

Madoguchi is a Japanese term that translates as ‘window opening’ and its interpretation depends on its environment: in business circles, it is an individual ‘point person’ or ‘contact person’; in political environs, an enabling diplomat; and in cultural areas, a mediator or principal communicator. In working across or within cultures, a *madoguchi* bears similarities to a translator as an enabler of communication. However, whereas the primary function of a translator can be viewed as translating words or phrases from one language to another, a *madoguchi* is distinct given his or her function as a cultural mediator, an agent of initiative and exchange between varying social milieu and dichotomous cultural fields, whose objective is to facilitate relationships, coordinate responses and unify positions. Kopp defines a *madoguchi* as ‘your Japanese “go to” person’ and gives an example of their function within a Japanese company: ‘a madoguchi would be coordinating the responses and communicating a unified company line to the outside’ (Kopp 2013). The role of *madoguchi* has particular resonance within Japan, where the concept of smooth social communications is embedded deeply in traditional cultural mores and *madoguchi* are particularly valued as skilled go-betweens for two parties in establishing *shoukai* – introductions – and enabling professional relations and business efficacy.

Within the fashion landscape, a *madoguchi* is seen as providing an essential operative function between two cultures, facilitating business engagement through social skills, such as being connected in the ‘right way’ and operating with bicultural awareness of social mores, critical characteristics to functioning as an effective, cultural ‘glue’. As the global marketplace has grown in the twentieth century, the interconnectedness

between multiple cultures and the need to communicate and act effectively has intensified in the fashion industry. In a feature for the fashion news authority the Business of Fashion, Rob Young (2013) discusses the emergence of specialized *madoguchi* in the fashion industry in Japan:

In Japanese business culture, the ‘*madoguchi*’ (literally, ‘window opening’) was traditionally someone who sat as the designated contact person funnelling all dialogue between two companies. Over time, it has also come to refer to a host of independent specialists who – to varying degrees – act as scout, market researcher, mediator, cultural ambassador, interpreter and deal broker between Japanese and international markets. As in most other sectors, they are usually bicultural and bilingual but ‘fashion hunters’, as they are sometimes playfully cast in my industry, are an especially diverse, valuable and enigmatic bunch. (Young 2013)

Young (2013) labels a *madoguchi* as a ‘gatekeeper of fashion’, lending the impression of an individual with control over cultural borders, with fashion as currency and communication as key. Applying his definition to my personal experience as *madoguchi* to Shiseido, there were certainly elements of fashion hunter and cultural gatekeeper in my role of sourcing and reporting on creative talent found in the United Kingdom. Initially I acted, in many ways, closer to a foreign fashion correspondent issuing a one-way flow of cultural content, which contradicts the general concept of a *madoguchi* as agent of dialogue or two-way flow. However, my contribution to an

eventual two-way dialogue between British and Japanese fashion cultures came about in a surprising way, when I later discovered copies of *Hanatsubaki* on sale at a basement avant-garde boutique, the Pineal Eye in Soho, London, imported into the United Kingdom and on sale to the culturally invested consumers that found their way down those stairs.

The length of my six-year tenure as a *madoguchi* indicates a belief in my ability to recognize new British fashion talent as it emerged and of this being of continual long-term value to Shiseido. For this reason, an auto-ethnographic exploration of my own path to becoming a *madoguchi* through evolving professional environments and learning experiences is crucial to determine how these steps directly equipped me with the ability to hunt, select and translate culture for a foreign audience. Pierre Bourdieu's ([1979] 2010) reflections on the aesthetic disposition poignantly apply here to my ability to perform as a 'window opener' and 'gatekeeper of fashion':

The aesthetic disposition, understood as the aptitude for perceiving and deciphering specifically stylistic characteristics is [...] inseparable from specifically artistic competence. The latter may be acquired by explicit learning or simply by regular contact with works of art, especially those assembled in museums and galleries, where the diversity of their original functions is neutralized by their being displayed in a place consecrated to art, so that they invite pure interest in form. (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 43)

Bourdieu's notion of accruing a certain disposition through frequently viewing art in galleries can be applied to viewing fashion when presented as art, such as when displayed on the elevated arena of a catwalk stage or in a gallery. As a fashion reporter, over the years I have watched many experiential and immersive fashion presentations where pure interest in form is expected. My aesthetic disposition was also at work when scouting new talent and applying certain evaluative criteria to a fashion product, experience, exhibition or designer to assess its artistic legitimacy and 'fit' (Bohm 1996: 104–05) for the *Hanatsubaki* audience. This is expanded upon in more detail later. Of interest now is to determine and culturally position the connection between my ability to make such critical decisions based on an aesthetic confidence and my formative hours studying fashion. Bourdieu ([1979] 2010) views two environs of learning as critical to developing an aesthetic disposition and individual competence – domestic (presupposed to include home life and extracurricular personal habits) and scholastic. He states:

Most often it results from the unintentional learning made possible by a disposition acquired through domestic or scholastic inculcation of legitimate culture. This transposable disposition, armed with a set of perceptual and evaluative schemes that are available for general application, inclines its owner towards other cultural experiences and enables him to perceive, classify and memorize them differently. (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 20)

Bourdieu ([1979] 2010: 46–47) believes that tacit knowledge and accuracy of assessment is built by immersion and experience in particular creative environs. This is certainly provided by the extended period of time that an average student undertakes to

complete a higher-education qualification in fashion in Britain, learning to critique fashion design, textile samples, print patterns and develop the ability to converse using a sartorial-based lexicon and debate topics such as form versus function. It is the luxury of time spent on cultural training that allows for the fostering of creative instincts and skills. For me, five years of education studying fashion communication and promotion at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London provided a rich incubating environment; in one studio, I could see an exquisite dart being pressed; in the library, I could watch archival footage of an Alexander McQueen show; and I could slip in to watch the annual graduation catwalk show, the first official presentation of that year's young talent. My aesthetic disposition was cultivated in the corridors of this internationally acclaimed institution, with competence and then confidence emerging, as a response to the creative think tank and academic hothouse environment; my cultural antennae and sense of critical judgement evolved through hours of learning about the precepts, rules, principles and practice of fashion from professional dons, industry mentors and my peers – the naive fashion students absorbed in becoming aspiring expression makers, commentators and producers.

Looking back now at my *madoguchi* role for *Hanatsubaki*, where I needed to judge if a fashionable silhouette was notable, a designer's process was original or determine whether an entire collection was culturally legitimate or not, my abilities could certainly be traced back to this scholastic experience. Practising higher-level, theoretical aesthetic distinction – for example, writing a journalistic review of a fashion show for an academic module – taught me how to act the role of fashion's 'critical friend' (Costa and Kallick 1993: 49–51). Students of fashion can be viewed as having the luxury of time and reason to indulge in interpreting the explicit and implicit contextual reference points (such as wearability, semiotic reading, cultural inferences)

and content of fashion (fabric, usage, silhouette) and encouraged to form a critical response to these aspects. In a Bourdieusian personal internalizing of principles of construction as a learning of manners, the scholastic fashion environment taught me manners of distinction and appropriate etiquette through unconscious and conscious acquisition of knowledge, mastering this social capital in a safe pedagogic environment. The development of this ‘slow familiarization’ (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 59) and personal embalmment in a vividly fashionable genesis environment enabled me to identify signs of distinction, such as connoisseurship and originality – attributes that would lend themselves to my future role as *madoguchi* for *Hanatsubaki*.

Alongside scholastic mastery of skills, Bourdieu views domestic inculcation as crucial to the development of aesthetic judgement. Even before my formal training, a familial background of relatives who were inventors, engineers, designers, photographers and builders must have contributed to the development of iterative, innovative thinking and creative and technical possibilities. I have always had an inquisitive nature and having relocated as a young adult to London, purposefully sought out aesthetic stimulation, indoctrinating myself through cultural formalities, such as looking at the artefacts displayed on pedestals, mannequins and inside display cases at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Courtauld Institute of Art and the Collect Craft Fair, where forms of fashion were culturally legitimized. Fashion here is not simply the product of material and symbolic production but of curation too. The Victoria and Albert Museum was a key cultural touchstone for me, having had experience assisting for short periods in the Museum’s Press Office and Publications Department; working as a guest curator of one of the Fashion In Motion catwalk shows; and attending media previews of exhibitions as a fashion reporter for *Hanatsubaki*. Indeed, it could be said that over the years, I developed a type of ‘institutional thinking’ and adopted its value

system, both contributing to and critically reviewing cultural elite activity through the pages of *Hanatsubaki* magazine, as part of a particular level of legitimatization of British taste transnationally.

Other modes of cultivation came through the hours I spent informally interacting with newly established designers. ‘Fashion hunter’ is identified by Young (2013) as being a unique *madoguchi* function, and my sense of hunting for both the new and the news is typical of a journalist. Before my commission with *Hanatsubaki*, I had spent many satisfying days visiting independent designers, artists and makers in small workshops in London. During my early professional career, I had undertaken work placements on British national newspapers assisting journalists in their commentary on the fashion marketplace, and then I moved into permanent positions in public relations promoting luxury fashion. With holistic professional knowledge of the fashion communication, production and mediation system, I felt comfortable navigating between exploring pockets of independent creative talent, where rich seams of newsworthy talent may be found; spotting talented students at design-college shows; and visiting exhibitions at established institutions. In summary, I had the cultural inclination to scan the fashion landscape with both micro- and macro-lenses; a creative curiosity and impetus to find fresh talent; and the ability to critically assess legitimate talent.

Exploring the minutia of my education and early work experience through autobiographical reflection more precisely locates the *madoguchi* in the fashion field than Young’s (2013) definition, as ‘fashion hunters [...] [are a] diverse, valuable and enigmatic bunch’. Rather than viewing the workings of the *madoguchi* fashion elite as mystical, fundamental skills can be defined and charted: an aesthetic disposition

energized in culturally legitimate environments; competent aesthetic judgement derived from domestic and scholastic training; critical antennae developed through active fashion hunting; and adaptable communication skills accrued through practising ‘ease or cultivated naturalness’ (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 64). The way in which these skills were used to identify, interpret and transmit British culture to *Hanatsubaki*’s Japanese audience also provides a practical example of my bicultural ‘point person’ process as a fashion *madoguchi* dealing in transnational communication.

***Hanatsubaki*: A case study of transnational cultural exchange**

The beauty company Shiseido was originally established in 1872 as Japan’s first western-style pharmacy. In 1915, the founder’s son Fukuhara Shinzo became the owner; in 1916, he designed the Shiseido logo motif: a camellia flower (*hanatsubaki*); and in 1917, he launched a cosmetics department focusing the company on beauty rather than medicine (Mariko 2005). In 1924, an in-house publication was launched called *Shiseido Geppo* (‘Shiseido Monthly’), renamed *Shiseido Graph* between 1933 and 1937, and with the exception of a brief halt in publication during World War II, now continues as *Hanatsubaki*, which is promoted as building on the cultural legacy of the founding family (Shiseido 2016b). Shiseido labels it a ‘corporate culture magazine’ with a focus on broader culture and lifestyle rather than simply products and services. It is positioned as an elite publication with a transglobal perspective, aimed at a cultured segment of society, and it aims to be reflective of Shiseido’s mission statement: ‘We create relationships with people. We appreciate genuine, meaningful values. We inspire a life of beauty and culture’ (Shiseido 2016c).

A retailer promoting an affiliation with art and high-end culture is not unusual in Japan, as author Satsuki Milhaupt comments: ‘In Japan, displaying art and crafts in department stores enjoys a long history, so the idea of retail stores promoting art, as well as artists promoting retail products, is quite normal’ (2014: 186). As the Shiseido Group’s empire has expanded through the decades, the potential for expressing their values through owned media such as an in-house publication has evidently been successful. Viewing an assortment of contemporary sample covers of *Hanatsubaki* spanning the period that I worked as a *madoguchi* (2005–12) shows its identification with beauty and art, and a rich combination of both western and eastern cultural influences (Fig. 1). Shiseido’s intention was to create a ‘medium at the forefront of the times’ and its editorial focus is described as “‘visual entertainment”, with enhanced orientation towards being a cutting-edge culture magazine with a strong graphical approach’ (Shiseido 2016a).



Fig. 1: Examples from the author's collection of *Hanatsubaki*, June 2009–May 2011.

Courtesy of the author © 2016.

My original commission with *Hanatsubaki* emerged through working as the public relations officer for milliner Stephen Jones. Jones had many stockists and successful licences in Japan and had worked with Shiseido since 1988. The *Hanatsubaki* editorial team informed Jones that they required a knowledgeable fashion person with training in journalism to contribute monthly British cultural content that their Japanese audience would find interesting and I put myself forward. My link with Jones facilitated the *shoukai*, or introductions, with the Japanese party and provided endorsement through a professional connection. Upon commission, I was given limited guidelines – to find and report on the freshest, most original creative talent, events, exhibitions, books and

happenings in the United Kingdom. I requested to be sent past issues of *Hanatsubaki* to give me a sense of the editorial direction, and they acted for me as a back catalogue featuring proven culturally desirable objects, legitimized through their appearance in the client's prestigious publication. As I do not read Japanese, my interpretation was made through informal visual analysis in which the images acted as the main signifying text. The impression I drew was that unusual, hybridized objects with strong aesthetic 'concepts' (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 34) were prized, in keeping with Shiseido's desire for the publication to be avant-garde. To me, they indicated the editorial team's – and therefore audience's – particular taste, style and predilection for certain cultural artefacts, garments, jewellery and venues that seemed variously architectural, experimental, sculptural, crafted, playful and exaggerated. These realizations were synthesized into an aesthetic judgement, providing an evaluative schema that I could employ when sourcing or hunting fashion. It also gave me a manifested sense of which cultural artefacts, which fashion clothing, accessories, published monographs on creative icons, visionary and experimental architectural pavilions or exhibitions with vivid graphic displays, would likely translate best to a transnational, globally invested Japanese audience. As a paid *madoguchi* for over six years, it seems that my long relationship with *Hanatsubaki* magazine was due to my acuity and ability to subsequently identify particular artefacts that displayed these qualities. The monthly fee I was paid was the most solid evidence I had to go on; once the visual and written content was ready, I would e-mail it to Japan and in return receive a brief acknowledgement of receipt. Three months later, without further correspondence or feedback, six copies of *Hanatsubaki* would arrive through the post. Some months all my features would be published, some months not – it varied without explanation, and this will be analysed below.

As newsworthiness is a core precept of journalism and a fundamental aspect of fashion is the cycle of sartorial newness, I personally prioritized sourcing artefacts or individuals with amplified freshness and originality – for example, a designer’s first catwalk presentation; jewellery made using an innovative technique; or the launch of a multidisciplinary collaboration producing a hybridized offering. I wanted to excite, entertain and impress the Japanese audience with a sense of the dynamic cultural talent arising in Britain.

I worked within a conventional journalistic print schedule, sourcing content over four months in advance as the editorial magazine had a typical three-month publishing lead time. Of specific importance to the ‘hunt’ was my temporal knowledge of the fashion system and awareness of notable seasonal timings, which provided a rolling and seasonal showcase of potential talent, such as the calendar of formal events (on-schedule shows during Fashion Week, planned graduate shows, exhibitions) and informal happenings (pop-up, spontaneous, alternative). At this time, London was increasingly hosting platforms promoting emerging talent, such as ‘London Design Festival’, catwalk shows at the Royal College of Art and Central Saint Martins and off-schedule open studios during London Fashion Week. These launch-pad environments were rich picking grounds for *Hanatsubaki* content, complemented by discovering other more discreet pockets of creativity that I uncovered myself, such as the Cockpit Arts design community in Holborn, London.

Fashion hunting was investigative, thrilling, often physical and always time-consuming work. Locating a suitable cultural object had a process. In my earlier years of sourcing content, I would use my *Hanatsubaki* evaluative schema as a lens, for example, to methodically move around and scan mass numbers of objects displayed in

a multi-floor exhibition and to identify when an object was a good fit. I developed what felt like gut intuition. Industry trend forecaster, Martin Raymond (2010), interprets the act of forecasting as accruing through cultural acquisition and perpetual observations a vast mental filing system, which then prompts the forecaster with an ‘odd’ feeling when they see an anomaly: ‘An intuitive forecaster, with a vast back catalogue of experiences or “stuff”, is thus able to use this “alert” mechanism to warn himself or herself that something new and next is in the offing’ (Raymond 2010: 75). Over six years’ reporting to *Hanatsubaki*, I assessed a vast number of fashion objects, pieces of clothing and exhibitions, which developed my skills into what Raymond (2010: 75) terms ‘expert intuition’. Just as domestic and scholastic training was essential to informing my aesthetic disposition, so too did extended professional experience allow me to best locate the latest talent that London had to offer.

Once I had sourced potential content for the issue, the next step was to collate the information. While it may seem like a foreign concept in the digital age in which we currently live, it is important to bear in mind that when I began reporting in 2005, physical investigatory efforts were the principal method employed to uncover fresh creative talent. Yet within five years, in line with the explosion of cultural content online such as fashion blogs and websites, it became possible to hunt promising talent posted on the Internet relatively easily. Likewise, in 2005, a frequent challenge when dealing with young graduates was often their commercial and promotional naivety and lack of media-ready data. I would regularly interview a designer then photograph their product using a basic SLR camera, adjusting the image later in Photoshop to achieve print-quality visuals. Over the six years I worked for *Hanatsubaki*, this changed significantly as graduates became more technically skilled and media confident. Within five years, media packs of professional information such as press releases and DVDs

containing print-quality imagery were generally available on show stands, through online media newsrooms and on websites, and I could easily supplement this with an interview in person, or over the phone, Skype or e-mail.

Once I had secured detailed information and images for an object, designer or method, the next step was creating the written content. I viewed the short text features as ‘story vignettes’ giving short-form, crafted information on, for example, the fashionable artefact, its designer and their process. My interpretation of the word ‘vignette’ was to offer a conceptual insight – a window into British fashion culture. My own intention was to reveal through story vignettes a positive impression reinforcing the idea of British creativity as worth acknowledging, and of its reassuring iconic value, distinction and accessibility to the Japanese fashion audience. To reinforce this idea, within each story vignette, I prioritized giving information on the artefact, its prestige status (limited edition, price, place and eligibility in its field), and a description of the creative process, the final crafted output and commercial stockists or contact details. Having received no editorial direction from *Hanatsubaki* on the style of writing, I used description and personal quotations from the interviewees to communicate the qualities of craftsmanship, experimentalism and eccentricity that I felt the Japanese admired about the British. This can be viewed as evidence of a *madoguchi*’s influence creating highly edited national fashion narratives, mediated in their promotional nature for export to a foreign audience.

Issue #715 of *Hanatsubaki* (January 2010) has been selected as a typical case study, chosen from the years I worked for the magazine, that reveals in more depth the nature of my *madoguchi* process of creating mediated editorial content for transcultural transmission. In this issue, seven of my features were published, which includes all six

from the month I supplied plus one extra taken from a previous month's supply. The seven features appear over two double-page spreads on the 'IN FASHION' pages (Figs 2 and 3) and show a variety of cultural products sourced from within Britain: a new hardback book *MaRIO de Janeiro* by fashion photographer Mario Testino; a fluorescent collection of sculptural knitwear by Jenny Ellen Postle; an opening exhibition of theatrical photographs by artist Sarah Ramo at the Photographer's Gallery, London; the Quilt range of furniture by the Bouroullec brothers launched through British design company Established & Sons (co-founder Alasdair Willis is fashion designer Stella McCartney's husband); the All Knotted Up knitwear collection by Flora Collingwood-Norris; characterful loop portraits by sewing illustrator Lisa Connolly; and a fluorescent slip-cast ceramic dinner service by ceramicist Nicole Mueller at Maison Sauvage. This eclectic mixture of vivid cultural artefacts is in keeping with Shiseido's contemporary claim, as previously stated, as 'visual entertainment' (Shiseido 2016a).



Fig. 2: A selection of the features created by the author for *Hanatsubaki* magazine (issue #715, January 2010, pp. 4–5) from the author’s collection. Courtesy of the author © 2016.



Fig. 3: A selection of the features created by the author for *Hanatsubaki* magazine (issue #715, January 2010, pp. 6–7) from the author’s collection. Courtesy of the author © 2016.

Taking a closer look at one feature, that of the work of Jenny Ellen Postle, allows for an examination of how translation impacted upon the original cultural intention of a piece. Fig. 4 portrays the original English copy and Fig. 5 depicts the translated, published Japanese piece; the corresponding text is indicated by the letter ‘G’ in the publication. Fig. 6 shows an English translation of the Japanese piece featured in *Hanatsubaki*. The aim is to provide some reflection of the dialogic ‘traffic in things’, aspiring to ‘follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories [...] it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context’ (Appadurai 1986: 54). Comparing the original English feature to its Japanese translation reveals a high degree of refinement and stripped-

down meaning. Elements that I viewed as crucial to cultural storytelling were ‘designerly’ characteristics, such as adjectives and description (‘avant-garde silhouette’, ‘cut-out cage’ dresses), and evaluations of method (‘created through various crochet...’) and intent (‘knowingly sophisticated and offer both fashion interest and craft appeal’) were largely cut in the translation process. What remains is a layer of commercial information (‘long dresses and mini dresses’) and factual, noun-based language (adapting the title to ‘Knitted Dress’). This treatment is characteristic of the translation of all of my editorial pieces.

The level of translation could be viewed as reductionist in a multitude of ways and reveals the *Hanatsubaki* editor’s powerful position as final curator of the editorial framing of British creative content within the Japanese cultural field, plus a predisposition to communicate consumption-orientated information over idiosyncratic information. If cutting information could be said to reveal placement of value, then the individual design process and descriptive nature of the object could be deduced as being superfluous for a Japanese audience. A preference and cultural prioritization for visuals over written information can be concluded as all the photographs I originally supplied were printed without modification, which was typical of my experience working for the publication. This links to Shiseido’s editorial focus as being ‘a cutting-edge culture magazine with a strong graphical approach’ (Shiseido 2016a). It is an example of transborder visibility, where content has been transferred from one geographical location to another (Ma 2006) and underlines the view that consumer societies move towards an economy of signs and symbols (Lash and Urry 1994), prioritizing the visual or pictorial. Typical of the translated published versions of my editorials, it ultimately shows the borders and limitations of my *madoguchi* function as providing an initial ‘window opening’ into foreign culture, with control of the final translation and cultural

transmission lying with the Japanese client. Appadurai's 'traffic in things' can therefore be seen as negotiable, with elements available for interpretation by invested parties and with fluctuating cultural resonance and value in their respective cultural fields.

ILLUSIONS

Fantastic fluoro knit is always a good start for a winter outfit, and when combined with graphic patterns and an avant-garde silhouette it is even more promising.

Jenny Ellen Postle's knitted dresses are knowingly sophisticated and offer both fashion interest and craft appeal. She says that the 'textiles have been formed out of a desire to work graphically with knit and translate the striking patterns and feel of the theme into this craft.'

They are created through various crochet, machine and hand-knitting techniques and range from long jumper dresses to cut-out cage dresses. Postle's theme was 'illusions' and she says that she 'does not focus on the literal definition of the word but instead draws upon the colours, shapes and moods created by it.'

Challenging and sugar-sweet, these dresses are not for the shy of heart.

jennyyellenpostle@gmail.com

Fig. 4: Original English text on Jenny Ellen Postle from the author's collection.

Courtesy of the author © 2016.

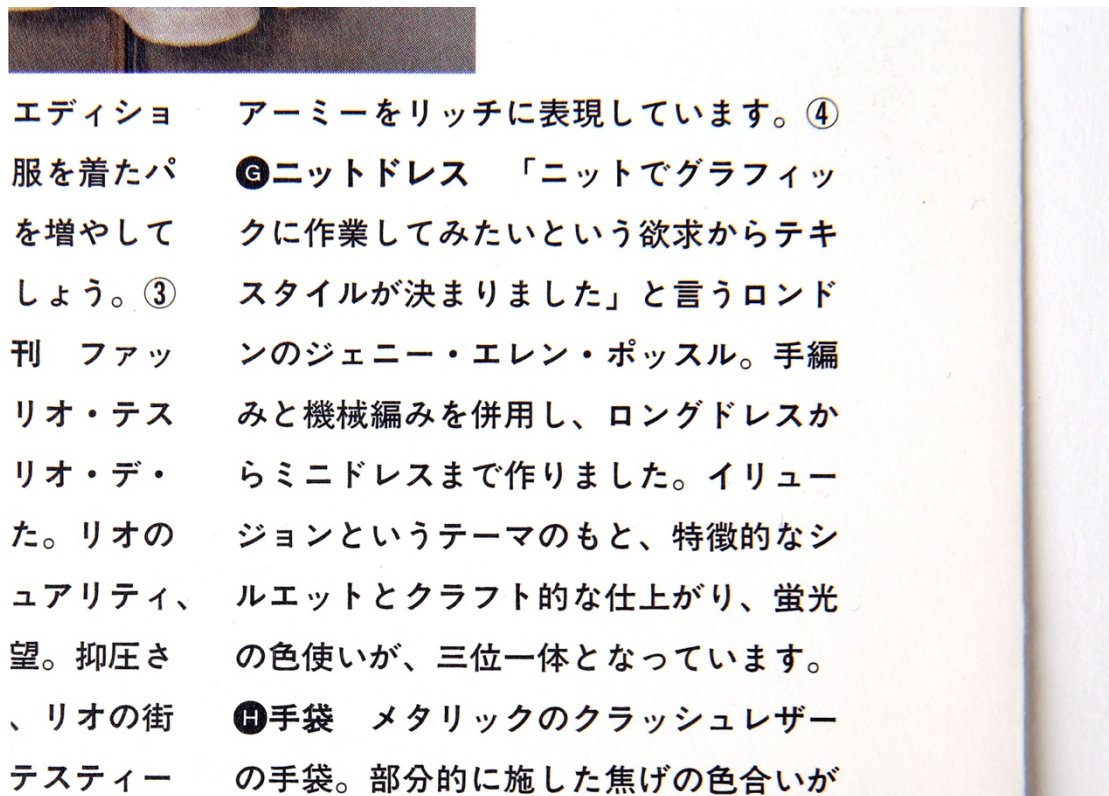


Fig. 5: 'G' – the published Japanese text about Jenny Ellen Postle for *Hanatsubaki* magazine (issue #715, January 2010, p. 4) from the author's collection. Courtesy of the author © 2016.

(G) Knitted Dress:

"I wanted to work graphically with knitting, so that determined the textile," said London designer Jenny Ellen Postle. Long dresses and mini dresses were made combining hand- and machine-knitted methods. The theme for these dresses is 'illusion' and combine the three elements of characteristic lines, artistic finish and fluorescent colour.

Fig. 6: Translated English text on Jenny Ellen Postle, translated by Eclipse Translations, from the author's collection. Courtesy of the author © 2016.

It is meaningful also to consider the relational design in which the text occurs alongside the images and editorial layout (Figs 2 and 3). The 'IN FASHION' spreads further reveal the approach to graphic design and dominance of visuals over written text, with images given greater page space, situated top and middle of the page and printed in colour. Images are often cut out, set at angles, overlaid and, most revealingly, even obscure the text – the 'IN FASHION' title – placing it in a subordinate position. Sets of images of the same item or focus are kept together, as in the two connected images showing Jenny Ellen Postle's sculptural fluorescent knitwear (Fig. 7) and beside each entry is an English capital letter acting as a navigational device, cross-referencing a Japanese text entry organized below alphabetically – an organizational layout reinforcing the transglobal perspective of the magazine.



Fig. 7: Image from *Hanatsubaki* magazine (issue #715, January 2010, p. 4) from the author's collection. Courtesy of the author © 2016.

The overall aesthetic impression of a *Hanatsubaki* spread is of modern eclecticism, a riot of colour and style, a mildly anarchistic and experimental bricolage approach that breaks conventional graphic rules. Keet comments on the transnational role of contemporary Japanese magazines, saying that '[m]agazines have facilitated the global flow of images and are consumed voraciously in Japan' (Keet 2010: 129). Indeed, the nature of a monthly cultural magazine is its ability to present an ever-changing insight into the spectacle of contemporary consumerism, and the physical fashion magazine can be viewed as a component within the 'technology of enchantment' (to build on Gell's [1992: 43] ideas). The 'IN FASHION' spreads in issue #715 shows fashionable

artefacts picked from London, Paris and Tokyo, among other fashion cities, and there is a magic within this type of presentation of fashion, as if it is based on an ‘enchanted fabrication of images of seduction’ (Lipovetsky [1987] 1994: 182) or at least an ‘enchantment of appearances’ (Moeran 2015a: 26). Within the *Hanatsubaki* spreads there seems to exist an ‘interwoven macro-culture’ (Maynard 2004: 3), a geographic bricolage of fashionable ideals represented in a captured and curated ‘space of commodity culture’ (Crang, Dwyer and Jackson 2003). As Moeran (2015b: 8) points out, ‘magicians of fashion and beauty use technologies of enchantment as a means of persuasion’ towards an aesthetic end. In this instance, the design promoted as coming out of the established cities of fashion lends the publication its prestigious cultural weight and so presents *Hanatsubaki* as a leading authority on cutting-edge global fashion. Within the ‘IN FASHION’ editorial framing, representations of experimental, avant-garde and transnational fashion objects are manifestly tested within the ‘window’ or frame of the page. This frame can be viewed as a modern and legitimate, site-specific cultural space, with auteurship provided by *Hanatsubaki* and sponsorship by Shiseido – their respective functions as authoritative host and legitimating power.

In turn, the *Hanatsubaki* audience were expected to be sophisticated cultural readers themselves, to react to the aesthetic as a representation of a complex transcultural field, inhabited by multiple foreign and national creative expressions. Jackson, Thomas and Dwyer (2007: 908) provide perspective: ‘consumers participate in transnational social space through their knowledge about the geographical origins of particular goods or through the symbolic associations they make between particular commodities and particular places’. The implicit idea of travel can be seen to be part of *Hanatsubaki* rhetoric through, for example, the features showcasing British cultural objects that symbolize a geography of fashion marking an exotic, utopian ‘elsewhere’ (Barthes

[1967] 1990: 251). Within the 'IN FASHION' editorial page, the 'elsewhere' visual elements seem to easily mix with domestic elements: visual evidence of the transnational space of commodity culture (Crang, Dwyer and Jackson 2003). It shows evidence of a rich cultural flow within transnational *emporion* or *medi-terranean* topography (Leontis 1997: 189), where connecting routes circulate a 'traffic in things' (Appadurai 1986: 54), which in turn provide multidimensional cultural glue. The transnational global flow of fashion is also clear in the selling of *Hanatsubaki* magazine within a London retail environment, the Pineal Eye in Soho. As a Japanese editorial import sold in sterling within the British marketplace, it exemplifies the ultimate type of cultural transmission and proof of the traffic of things, facilitated in part by a cultural 'go-between' – a fashion *madoguchi*.

The successes and limitations of my experience as a fashion *madoguchi*

The quantity of pieces that I created and supplied to *Hanatsubaki*, over 300 in total, published in monthly issues from November 2005 to January 2012, could be viewed as evidence of a long-standing and mutually beneficial cross-cultural arrangement. Certain skills I had were clearly valued by the magazine's editors. My base in, and intimate acquaintance with, the fashion scene in London allowed me to operate as a scout or fashion hunter, investigating, reporting and gathering content on the latest fashion innovations as they happened. In 2005, pre-fashion-blog-revolution and before the establishment of many authoritative fashion websites, this content would have been nearly impossible for the *Hanatsubaki* team to source from Tokyo. As an essential go-between person and market researcher, it could be suggested that it was my physical location operating within a premiere global fashion city that was of value, along with

my aesthetic instinct and disposition cultivated from years of fashion training in London in scholastic and domestic environments as well as my professional connection with Stephen Jones, which was the validating basis of Shiseido's trust in my cultural judgement. My journalistic skills and ability to create print-quality, publishable content pitched to *Hanatsubaki*'s foreign Japanese audience evolved over time. Young's (2013) definition of a *madoguchi* as a 'gatekeeper of fashion' also describes appropriately my selective process in mediating and transmitting legitimate British cultural content, resulting in communicating a specific narrative of British fashion and taste transnationally. I determine that my *madoguchi* role was truly achieved for the client at the point when the *Hanatsubaki* editorial team in Japan received my cultural content and then proceeded to further process it through translation, editing and framing it for the local audience without further consultation. Tse (2014), considering the fashion media in Hong Kong, reflects on the view of pluralist theorists, such as Barnard (1996), when they assert that 'fashionability is negotiated through the process of fashion communication' (Tse 2014: 68). Tse's study observed a fashion magazine and its personnel, 'trying to create and maintain a specific set of fashion meanings in their daily work. This involved the magazine in various forms of appropriation and negotiation in the process of encoding fashionability' (Tse 2014: 68).

Certainly, for me, the dialogic opportunities of the collaboration could have been more extensive and the lack of regular conversation between myself and the *Hanatsubaki* editorial team, perhaps due to common language difficulties and the cultural expectations of a *madoguchi* arrangement, resulted in a more challenging task. When requested, I received limited feedback without indication of creative direction on future issues or guidance in sourcing relevant content, and this made me fully reliant on personal intuition, judgement and instinct. Each month, the number of my features

that were published varied, but with the attrition rate low and full payment regardless, it seemed a commercial exercise that benefited both parties. In 2011, the *Hanatsubaki* editorial team informed me that the publication would be changing, prioritizing the website and digital content, and subsequently, January 2012 was the last print issue to which I contributed and my role came to an end.

Hanatsubaki magazine's 'IN FASHION' content featured a smorgasbord of elite artefacts, much of which originated from outside of Japan. *Hanatsubaki*, then, asserted a position of exclusivity and high culture through its presentation of a global palate of exotic fashions selected by (exotic) expert foreign correspondents. It claims legitimacy as an elite cultural authority through its use of rare or esoteric cultural objects to maintain status distinction (Hedegard 2006: 53). Üstüner and Holt (2010) have argued that specific westernized objects have been shown to be utilized as elite status symbols for semi-peripheral societies. However, given the buzz around Japanese fashion and Tokyo as a fashion city at the time, this seems unlikely. Rather, the representation of elite cultural objects in *Hanatsubaki* – some of European distinction – reinforce Tokyo as cosmopolitan leader, rather than insular player on the world stage of global fashion. Shiseido's role and original mission echoes Satsuki Milhaupt's (2014) observations that Japanese department stores have presented themselves as purveyors of transnational fashionability since their inception. Fashion's taste for cultural imports has been commented on by Georg Simmel (1957), who reflects on the status of foreign items as an element of demarcation:

there exists a wide-spread predilection for importing fashions from without, and such foreign fashions assume a greater value within the circle, simply because

they did not originate there [...] the exotic origin of fashions seems strongly to favor the exclusiveness of the groups which adopt them. (Simmel 1957: 545)

Tokyo culture in the late twentieth century was that of a cosmopolitan world city, and it could be suggested that the *Hanatsubaki* editorial team featured foreign cultural artefacts in the magazine for their validating symbolism, as they wanted to be seen as a leading player in elite fashion demonstrating acute awareness of global developments. Fukai (2010) charts the continuing avant-garde behaviour of Japanese fashion designers in her *Future Beauty: 30 Years of Japanese Fashion*, commenting that from the 1970s

Japanese fashion revealed the benefits of ceasing to perceive Japan as an exotic marginal culture and demonstrated that clothes born from non-European spheres can have universality. This was more than just a temporary shock. These Japanese designers led the charge into the postmodern realm and the twenty-first century. (22-23)

Tokyo could be seen as dynamically evolving its status to that of a fashion world city, as a significant producer of symbolic fashion capital constructed and fortified through visually inspirational, subcultural street style and the Japanese fashion designers who operate within their own fashion system. Around the same time that my role as fashion *madoguchi* was beginning, Kawamura observed the city's consolidation on the global fashion map, stating:

Japan's position in the global order of fashion is in transition. Tokyo is emerging from a history where it featured as a city of consumption, where people competed with one another to purchase expensive Western brands for status, to becoming a city of production where some of the most innovative designers in the world are establishing themselves. (Kawamura 2006: 55)

Given that I contributed to *Hanatsubaki* between 2005 and 2012, these dynamic external macro- and micro-social factors would have been affecting publishing decisions. Technological advances were changing communication possibilities and editorial practices, with new media creating revolutionary shifts in how fashion was being reported and transmitted. It is important to question whether the role of a transnational fashion hunter could have been achieved reasonably by a cultural reporter within Japan, rather than a reporter in a foreign field, given the explosion of accessible online content. New designers were starting to launch themselves onto the marketplace by publicizing their practice online, using digital technologies and effective self-promotion through dialogue-rich social media platforms. Fashion commentary was being achieved by citizen journalists or bloggers acting as the new cultural mediators with potential global reach, and an increasing global audience consumed image-centric content published through dialogic-enabled online channels at an ever-accelerated rate.

Digital media is a transformative conduit that has directly influenced the transmission of fashion, being a channel of cultural production that prioritizes immediacy, and *Hanatsubaki* ultimately responded by prioritizing their website

content, for which my expertise was deemed no longer necessary. During the span of my time working for *Hanatsubaki*, I noticed how my own process of sourcing content increasingly involved hunting for fashion talent online, and I began to make fashion selections based on the visual immediacy of the digital image, rather than responding to haptic feedback of the fashion object – such as touch, weight, interaction, texture – as per the earlier years. As the technological possibilities evolved, my traditional role of cultural mediator became more mediatized and the time-consuming, investigative practices that I had previously engaged with and enjoyed could easily be bypassed due to changes in the media and accessibility of content. Agnes Rocamora (2016: 4) makes a useful distinction, defining mediatization as ‘looking at the ways fashion practices have adapted to, and been transformed by, the media’ compared to mediation, which refers to ‘media as conveyors of meaning, to their role in the transmission and circulation of messages’ (Rocamora 2016: 3). This auto-ethnographic study of my own practice as a fashion *madoguchi* working on a traditional print magazine thus charts how my own process of sourcing and reporting on transnational fashion changed in line with the landscape of fashion journalism in response to the new media possibilities, and how my function as a mediator became more mediatized.

Conclusion

While Young (2013) suggests that *madoguchi* in fashion possess some sort of mystical ability to identify trends, an examination of my role for Shiseido demonstrates the importance of scholastic and domestic inculcation and professional experience. My personal experience as fashion hunter, communicator and transnational fashion mediator reveals a process of ‘window opening’ on emerging British fashion trends

through editorial ‘vignettes’ produced for *Hanatsubaki*. Here, ‘framing’, editorial control and the prioritization of visuality impacts on the meanings of cross-cultural transmission and demonstrates differences in communication practices, narratives and cultural values within fashion.

This leads me to reflect that my role as fashion *madoguchi* was as a well-placed and trained native scout and mediator in London, sourcing and transmitting the latest British talent to the client, who presented it as the latest global fashion trends in *Hanatsubaki* and as clear cultural capital. The mode of sourcing and transference was through means and methods typical of the first decade of the twenty-first century, before the changes wrought on the industry by the digital age had fully impacted. At that point, the skilful exchange and transformation of content aided by a *madoguchi* was of high value and it is pertinent to note that the contemporary transcultural field of fashion continues today to require intermediaries and gatekeepers who hold the cultural keys to fashion meaning.

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